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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001099

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/18/2013

TAGS: [PREF](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: MFA ON IRAQ REFUGEE/IDP ISSUE: ACTION REQUEST

REF: A. (A) ANKARA 0964

[1](#)B. (B) ANKARA 0946

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reason: 1.5(b,d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request -- see para 8.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: MFA Deputy Director General for International Political Organizations Tunc Ugdul called EconCouns in February 17 to discuss USG and GOT approaches to refugee/IDP issues related to a potential Iraq operation. Ugdul reiterated that Turkey's intention to set up Red Crescent-run camps just across the border was compatible with the U.S. approach of providing humanitarian assistance to Iraqis beyond that border zone. He said the GOT agreed in principle to opening its borders to NGOs providing humanitarian assistance, and asked why no NGOs had yet applied for permission. Ugdul also asked whether the USG planned to open a humanitarian coordination center in Turkey similar to that established in Kuwait. Finally, he indicated that the GOT was ready to approve the USG request to bring in and store one million humanitarian daily rations, subject to working out some logistical details. Embassy will work with Eucom regarding next steps on a coordination center, and recommends that Washington encourage 1-2 NGOs to test the GOT's professed willingness to open its border to them. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (C) MFA Deputy Director General for International Political Organizations Tunc Ugdul called in EconCouns February 17 to follow up on recent discussions on Iraq-related humanitarian issues (reftels). Ugdul said he wanted to clarify what he termed "different perceptions" in the USG and GOT about the outcome of those discussions. Specifically, he was concerned by reports that the USG thought its approach to the issue was significantly different than that of the GOT. EconCouns noted that the GOT approach focused on establishing Red Crescent-run camps just across the border, while the USG wanted to deliver food and other supplies to Iraqi people where they live. The USG was still not sure whether Turkey would be willing to open its border to NGOs so they could bring the necessary supplies from Turkey into Iraq.

[1](#)4. (C) Ugdul argued that the two approaches were compatible, and that Turkey, while establishing its camps across the border, would in no way limit U.S. humanitarian efforts. He reiterated (ref A) that NGOs wishing to work in the Red Crescent-run camps would need to negotiate and sign an MOU with the MFA to ensure coordination. Those wishing to work beyond the border region (i.e. further into Iraq) did not need to sign such an MOU, but would need GOT authorization. Such NGOs should contact the MFA, explain their goals, their proposed areas of operation, and what they planned to bring across the border. Once the GOT approved an NGO's general application, the NGO would need to advise the MFA in advance of each shipment so that the MFA could coordinate the border crossing. Ugdul said that, while the GOT had not formally finalized this approach, his comments reflected official GOT thinking at this point. He asked why no NGOs had yet applied to operate across the border, and agreed it would be useful for 1-2 "credible" NGOs to apply in the near future. The only issue, he said, would be that the NGOs should confine their activity to humanitarian and health work; the GOT would not welcome NGOs coming to work in the political area.

[1](#)5. (C) Ugdul said the MFA was working with the ICRC on the issue of the legal mandate to operate the camps across the border. He expected the GOT to approve shortly the ICRC's request to open a temporary office in Turkey, and hoped that

the issue of legal mandate could be addressed via the Red Crescent's membership in the IFRC.

16. (C) Noting that the USG had established a Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) in Kuwait, Ugdul asked if the USG intended to do so in Turkey. If so, he suggested the Embassy forward a specific proposal. EconCouns responded that the Humanitarian Planning Team had proposed, during its January visit, establishing such a coordination mechanism, which ideally would be "plugged" into the Kuwait HOC.

17. (C) Finally, Ugdul said that, after an initial misunderstanding, the GOT was now ready to approve the USG request to bring in and store one million humanitarian daily rations in Turkey, subject to some clarification of logistical issues. Embassy/ODC is following up directly with the MFA on this.

18. (C) Comment and Action Request: Embassy recommends we test the MFA's new-found openness on this issue. We will use this week's visit of General Pete Osman to discuss (internally) next steps on establishing a coordination center, and recommend that Washington encourage 1-2 NGOs to apply to the MFA for approval to perform cross-border operations.

PEARSON